

VZCZCXRO3182
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHPS #0775/01 3131621
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 091621Z NOV 07
FM USOFFICE PRISTINA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7808
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1326
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHFMISS/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUFOANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000775

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, INL, AND EUR/SCE, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN FOR
DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KV](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: HOW TO VOTE ON NOVEMBER 17

REF: PRISTINA 723

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Kosovars will head to the polls on November 17 for the first election in three years. An unofficial NGO parallel count might provide results within hours of polls closing, and thus lead to immediate coalition discussions. The Council of Europe (CoE) has 150 short term observers on the ground, and USOP will field more than a dozen CoE-trained observer teams on election day. Voters will cast ballots in three elections and, for the first time, will have an open list from which to choose members of the central Assembly and municipal assemblies. This also represents the first time they will elect their mayors directly. Given the additional complexity of these elections, the OSCE and Central Election Commission (CEC) hope that additional polling centers and the extensive voter education campaign already underway will help minimize long lines and confusion at the polls on election day. The OSCE is also planning a limited presence in the north on election day. Though there is little expectation of Serb participation in these elections, in order for the CoE to certify the elections open, fair and transparent, the opportunity to vote, at least, must be available. END SUMMARY.

WHERE TO VOTE

¶2. (U) There will be 621 polling centers - 10 percent more than in the 2004 elections and nearly double the number of centers available in 2000. Some centers will include several polling stations - separate rooms - for a planned total of 2,350 stations, a 35 percent increase over 2004. With 1.6 million ballots being printed, this should mean no polling station has more than 750 voters. Ballots for municipal elections will only be available in that municipality; one cannot vote on the Prizren mayor's race from Gjilane, and vice versa. Each polling station (PS) will have two PS teams made up of members of the municipal election committees (MECs). One team will be responsible for the PS during voting hours and the other for counting ballots once the PS closes.

¶3. (U) Polling station teams are responsible for bringing all materials to the polling centers on November 16. This

includes the final voters lists, blank conditional voter forms, ballots, ballot boxes, voting booths, UV lamps and invisible ink, official ballot stamps, and poll books. On the morning of November 17, these teams verify the number of ballots and ensure that campaign materials have been removed from the vicinity and voting information has been posted.

HOW TO VOTE

¶4. (U) Polls are open from 7am - 7pm on election day. The CEC may extend hours up to midnight if that would best serve the interests of the electoral process. Any eligible voters in line at closing time are allowed to vote. All CEC election rules are available at: www.cec-ks.org. How-to-vote pamphlets have been distributed in five languages: Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Roma, and Turkish.

¶5. (U) Special needs voters can bring a helper with them to the polls to assist in voting, but polling teams and accredited observers may not assist special needs voters.

¶6. (U) Upon arrival at the voting center, voters must present valid ID and show that they have not already been stamped with invisible ink. (NOTE: Under CEC Rule 8, only UNMIK IDs, UNMIK travel documents, UNMIK driver's licenses, IDP cards, or refugee cards are considered valid identification. We have urged UNMIK to expand this to include Government of Serbia-issued ID. END NOTE.) Next, the voter must sign the final voters list, have her/his finger sprayed with ink, receive stamped ballots, and proceed to one of the voting booths to vote. A voter may receive a new ballot if he spoils his ballot, and after voting must return the ballots to the proper ballot boxes.

PRISTINA 00000775 002 OF 003

¶7. (U) Each voter will receive three color-coded ballots - one each for the Kosovo Assembly (red), the Municipal Assembly (blue), and the mayor (yellow). The mayoral ballots are a simple list of candidates. For the assemblies, voters must first mark their chosen party, then mark the numbers corresponding to up to ten candidates of their choice from the lists provided.

¶8. (U) In case of disturbances at a voting center, the chairperson of the polling team may suspend voting and close the center until order is re-established. No one may bring weapons into a PS except uniformed KPS officers casting ballots and police restoring order after a disturbance.

¶9. (U) Kosovars not living in Kosovo may vote by mail. By the October 31 deadline, 3,707 registration applications for out-of-Kosovo voting had been received, including 888 from Serbia proper (compared to 428 received from Serbia and Montenegro in 2004), 1,159 from Switzerland, and 727 from Germany. (NOTE: Out-of-Kosovo voters may also mail their applications along with their ballots, postmarked by November 17 and received in Kosovo by November 20; however those who did not apply by October 31 cannot appeal if their applications are rejected. END NOTE.) Ballots were mailed on October 29 to the nearly 6,000 out-of-Kosovo voters who successfully registered in 2004, and by November 8, a total of 9,621 ballots had been mailed to out-of-Kosovo voters in 31 different countries.

COUNTING VOTES

¶10. (U) When the polling centers close, the polling teams record the information of the accredited observers present. If observers leave the center before the count is finished, they are not allowed back in. In the counting process, ballots will be deemed invalid if more than one party is marked, if the marks make the intention of the voter unclear, or if the ballot was not stamped with the official ballot stamp. Complaints concerning voting and counting must be submitted to the Election Complaints and Appeals Commission

(ECAC) within 24 hours of the complainant becoming aware of the alleged violation, and in any event no later than 48 hours after the alleged violation occurred. The ECAC must rule on a complaint within five days.

¶11. (SBU) OSCE estimates that the official vote count will be available around December 3. (This does not include mayoral run-off elections, the date for which has not yet been set.) However, the NGO coalition Democracy In Action (DIA) will have a parallel vote count based on regular (not conditional or mail-in) ballots cast at polling stations. DIA count observers at each polling station will send an SMS to a central server in Pristina once the 750 or so Kosovo Assembly ballots are counted. This could happen as early as 19:30 on election day if polls close on time and Kosovo's tempermental mobile phone system cooperates. Thus even without official results, governing coalition negotiations could be underway as soon as November 18.

MONITORING THE ELECTION

¶12. (SBU) The Council of Europe, which is responsible for election monitoring, is planning for a minimum of 150 observers. USOP plans to field 14 observer teams, each including two American officers and at least one LES interpreter, all as accredited observers. Observers are allowed to monitor the entire voting and counting process, with the exception of the actual marking of a ballot by a voter. CEC has accredited over 24,000 observers, compared to 13,000 in 2004. Certified political entities, NGOs, and governmental and inter-governmental organizations all have the right to be accredited monitors of these elections.

VOTING IN THE NORTH

¶13. (C) There is very little expectation by any party involved in this process that members of the Serb community

PRISTINA 00000775 003 OF 003

in either the north or the southern enclaves will vote. In fact, several Serb political parties publicly withdrew their candidacies on November 2 as a result of continuing pressure from Belgrade not to participate. Nevertheless, OSCE must provide potential voters with the opportunity to cast a ballot on election day. Given the low probability that public buildings in Mitrovica and other Serb municipalities in the north will be made available, OSCE is exploring the options of using private premises or mobile voting stations. Currently, it is leaning toward using mobile voting stations.

At least two locations will be set up in Mitrovica. Voters will not be assigned to one or the other of the stations, but can choose to vote at either. For some of the small municipalities, if private premises are not secured, OSCE plans to use mobile stations as well. In this case, they will likely remain in a given location for a limited amount of time and then move on to another location. Though OSCE has managed to hire a few locals to work on election preparations, they plan to staff the polling stations on election day with international staff, mainly Bosnians, with the appropriate language skills.

¶14. (C) COMMENT: Preparations for the November 17 elections - by the CEC, OSCE, and CoE, and for our own monitoring effort - are proceeding apace. Although these elections will have several layers of added complexity, our hope is that additional polling centers and voter education will help them to be conducted smoothly and with a minimum of voter frustration and confusion. END COMMENT.

KAIDANOW